Claims

1. A composition comprising a multiplicity of particulate different labels, wherein each different label comprises a particulate support to which is coupled at least a first signal-generating moiety which generates a visible signal that characterizes said label, and

a second signal generating moiety of standardized intensity,

wherein the wavelength of the signal generated by said second signal-generating moiety is different from that which characterizes the label and

wherein all of the particulate supports in the composition generate the same signal from the second signal generating moiety and wherein said labels further contain a reagent which permits them to interact specifically with a desired target.

2. The composition of claim 1, wherein said characterizing signal generating moieties comprise at least two signal generating moieties wherein each of the moieties generates a signal different from that generated by the other(s) and wherein the magnitude of each said signals is varied among the different labels whereby each different label is thereby characterized by a different hue.

3. A method to provide a pattern of target substances which method comprises contacting an environment containing the target substances with the composition of claim 1 and viewing the pattern generated by the distribution of the labels among the targets, and

assessing the number of particulate labels associated with the detection space of any detected label.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said environment is displayed on a support suitable for viewing by microscopy,

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the environment comprises the collection of targets is an intracellular environment.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the environment comprises the collection of targets constitutes neural circuitry.